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Barbara C. Palmer
Florida State University

Chia-I Chen
Florida State University

Sara Chang
Pineview Elementary School

Judith T. Leclere
Florida State University

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According to the 2000 United States Census, Americans age five and older who speak a language other than English at home grew 47 percent over the preceding decade. This group accounts for slightly less than one in five Americans (17.9%). Among the minority languages spoken in the United States, Asian-language speakers, including Chinese and other Asian and Pacific Islander languages, have increased by more than 75 percent. Futher, the proportion of Asian language speakers having difficulty speaking English has almost doubled (Klein, Bugarin, Beitranena, & McArthur, 2004). Today, Chinese students are one of the largest groups of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the U.S. Children of Chinese immigrants to the U. S. face linguistic, cultural, and academic challenges. For teachers to be adequately prepared to design and implement instruction for Chinese ELLs, they must have an understanding of this population, the language differences between Chinese and English, and the most effective strategies for scaffolding language and literacy success. This article highlights two Chinese second-graders and their unique educational needs in order to provide insight and implications for instructing Chinese ELLs.

IN MARCH 1999, THE NUMBER of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. was 10.1 million (Wallraff, 2000). Among this population, 2.4 percent were Chinese speakers; and, of these, more than 80 percent spoke Chinese at home. The proportion of Asian language speakers from five to twenty-four years old who have difficulty acquiring English has increased substantially from 15 percent in 1979 to 25 percent in 1999 (Klein, Bugarin, Beitranena & McArthur, 2004). "Chinese learners are often stereotyped as high achievers and overlooked in literacy research" (Li, 2004, p. 31). As with any stereotyping, Chinese students often encounter the bias perpetuated by the "myth of the model minority." Many Americans mistakenly assume that all Chinese students come to their new country with special academic skills and acumen. Lee (1996) and Li (2002, 2003) suggest researchers pay more attention to individual and differential achievement, especially for the under-achieving Chinese students within this population. According to Fu (2003), many Chinese immigrant "students lack the content knowledge needed for American education, have limited to no English proficiency, have no parental or adult support at home for their school work, and need to make tremendous adjustments emotionally, socially, culturally, and academically in their new lives in America" (p. xxii).

Dong (1999) advocates that, in dealing with non-native students, teachers need information about students' native literacy learning in order to tailor their instruction. Au and Raphael (2000) emphasize that ELL (English Language Learners) instruction does not require that teachers share the same cultural, linguistic, or ethnic membership as their students. Thus, teachers should not feel limited in their ability to work with ELLs, including Chinese students, because they cannot speak the first language of their students. On the other hand, if teachers, especially mainstream classroom teachers, build up some knowledge of second language acquisition, they will learn methods to help the ELL students develop their second language and content area knowledge at the same time. According to Klein et al. (2004), students who speak minority languages and are not proficient in English need instructional programs designed specifically for them and teachers who have been trained to work with English language learners. "The narrower the gap between teacher intention and learner interpretation, the greater are the chances of achieving desired learning outcomes" (Kumaravadivelu, 1991, p. 98).

Such tenets reflect the importance of the scaffolding process (Bruner, 1975), which is based on Vygotsky's core assumptions about learning. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.76). With adequate support, children can accomplish tasks they could not master independently. Scaffolded instruction, defined as "the sequencing of prompted content, materials, tasks, and teacher and peer support to optimize learning" (Dickson, Chard, & Simmons, 1993, p.12) assures their success. Barbieri (2002) quotes Yi Zheng, a student in a New York City school, who appears to describe scaffolding in his own writings:

> Bridge
> Teacher is like a bridge
> give us knowledge and let
> us cross
> School is like the bridge pole
> lift us up and don't let
> us fall
> The books are like a
> bridge railing
> let us know it is not the way
> to go there
> And this bridge must be
> a very big and strong
> Bridge
> And it can lead us to
> Future. (p. 16)

Thus, Chinese immigrants perceive U.S. public school teachers and administrators to be essential components of a more secure future. However, Grant and Wong (2003) point out that "the mainstream literacy professionals have often failed to accept their role of helping language-minority learners develop skills in English reading" (p. 392). These authors conclude that the literacy performance chasm between language minority students and those whose first language is English results from

two systemic failures: (1) the failure of education programs to adequately prepare teachers to work with language-minority learners; and (2) the failure "of education researchers to engage in more substantive research on English reading development for such students [language-minority learners]" (p. 386). Therefore, we selected two Chinese second-graders, Zongyou and Xiaowei, who speak the Mandarin dialect to exemplify how Asian students have distinctly individual learning patterns, abilities and styles. The following observations of Zongyou and Xiaowei (pseudonyms) illustrate unique educational needs of two ELLs and provide insight and implications for practice.

Zongyou and Xiaowei

Classroom interactions, as well as the observations of a Chinese-speaking paraprofessional, have assisted Ms. Chang, an ELL teacher with twelve years of classroom experience, in designing instruction for the two Mandarin-speaking Chinese ELLs in her classroom. Ms. Chang teaches at a diverse metropolitan elementary school and adheres to the philosophy of scaffolding all learners to success. She is cognizant of the need to understand each student's home language, literacy level, schooling history, and cultural background when designing and implementing instruction.

During an interview, Ms. Chang reported that her Chinese students at this elementary school tend to fall into two groups: students whose parents are graduate students at one of the universities in the community, and students whose parents immigrated to the United States for better economic opportunities. According to Ms. Chang, the children of university students usually perform very well in both mainstream and ELL classes. However, the students in the second group typically go home to an empty house because their parents work long hours; consequently, their school work often suffers. For the students in both groups, Ms. Chang actively searches for information on research-based practices, supplementary materials, social services, and tutors. In addition, because she is aware that a student's first language development affects his or her second language acquisition process, she checks on each student's home language development.

Many of the generalizations concerning Chinese ELLs, however, do not hold true for Zongyou and Xiaowei. Zongyou and Xiaowei are both second-grade students in Ms. Chang's ELL class. Zongyou, the son of a graduate student, is considered by his teacher to be in need of additional instructional support. His progress has been slow and he displays a dislike for learning. Ms. Chang also reports that he tends to be a loner who only talks to teachers and seldom socializes with his peers. Initially, she was concerned that he might be autistic so she referred him to the school's intervention team who ruled out this possibility. Further investigation revealed that Zongyou has a complicated academic history that, in all likelihood, impacted his language development. Two of his previous years of schooling were in Germany. He was enrolled in school for two weeks in Tianjin, China, before moving to the U.S. in October 2003. His prolonged absence from school was due to the prevalence of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in China. Zongyou reports that he does not like life in his current city, saying that he had more friends in Tianjin. Zongyou does not appear to understand anything his teachers say in the classes in which English is spoken. Understandably, the course he likes most is math since he knows how to answer the questions by himself, even though he does not understand the words of the mainstream teacher.

In Ms. Chang's ELL class, Zongyou especially enjoys copying vocabulary from the blackboard and typically scores 100 percent on vocabulary tests. Zongyou chooses books with illustrations of Chinese children and asks that these books be read to him. When asked to write down some sentences to describe one of his favorite stories, Zongyou told a somewhat sad story about a little girl and her kitten, named Ginger, in Chinese. However, in his paper, he could only write down some simple English words, such as *girl, kitten, Ginger, rain,* and *cold,* instead of a whole sentence. Observations reveal that Zongyou really does not understand what is being said in class. For example, he continued to work on an activity even though the paraprofessional asked him three times to switch to the next task. Only after the instructions were translated to Chinese did he understand what was expected of him; at that point, he complied.

Zongyou seems to be introverted and has difficulty speaking in full

sentences. He does not pay attention in class and often smiles to himself as if he is having an internal dialogue. He requires constant refocusing and comprehension checks. Ms. Chang hypothesizes that some of Zongyou's behavior may be attributed to conditions of his home environment. He is an only child, his mother is ill, and his father appears to be emotionally detached. Zongyou is an excellent example of how environmental factors can impact a child's learning, including his second language acquisition process.

Xiaowei's parents run a Chinese restaurant and work from 9:00 a.m. to midnight every day. When Xiaowei first arrived in the U.S., his parents enrolled him in a church-based pre-kindergarten program. During Xiaowei's kindergarten year, he transferred to Ms. Chang's school, one of two public elementary schools identified in the district for ELL students. By first grade, his teachers suspected that he had a learning problem due to the slow progression of his oral language development. For this reason, he was referred to the intervention team for psychological testing. Through this testing, it was determined that Xiaowei, indeed, had a language impairment. At this point, Xiaowei's parents transferred him to a different school because of the restaurant business. The receiving school does not have an ELL program.

Xiaowei was born in Fujian, China, and came to the U.S. when he was four years old, an age at which he was still in the process of acquiring Mandarin Chinese, his first language. Xiaowei's parents are actively involved in the process of learning English. Because they thought it would be better for Xiaowei to hear only English, they did not continue speaking Mandarin to Xiaowei. Instead, Xiaowei's parents communicated with him in limited English, a language combining Mandarin and English without traditional grammar rules. As a result, Xiaowei has not developed proficiency in either Mandarin or English. Instead of following the language development stages usually evident in young learners (such as acquiring the "ing" verb ending first), he was actually manifesting his parents' limited English speaking patterns. For example, he often drops functional words such as "the" and speaks in "telegraphic" chunks. When Xiaowei transferred to another school having no ELL class, his pace in learning English slowed. Xiaowei word-calls when reading stories; his comprehension is limited. Xiaowei's

mainstream classroom teacher reports that he prefers multiple-choice reading comprehension questions to short-answer questions because he can guess with the multiple-choice format. She also believes that, with scaffolding, Xiaowei could do a better job of reading comprehension. Such scaffolding, for example, could include repeating the same item to him more than once in order to increase understanding. Even though Xiaowei is performing as a low-average student, he seems to enjoy the social aspects of school and he demonstrates much respect for his teachers.

There is evidence that Chinese ELLs, such as Zongyou and Xiaowei, are best supported in classrooms and schools in which the teachers:

1. recognize educational and cultural differences for Chinese ELL students;
2. learn contrastive analysis (language differences) for the two languages;
3. encourage the development of the student's first language (L1), and directly teach the positive transfers from L1 to L2 (second language);
4. develop the Chinese student's reading, writing, listening and speaking strategies for English;
5. utilize cooperative learning groups; and
6. solicit support beyond the classroom.

Recognize Educational and Cultural Differences for Chinese ELLs

As Heath and Mangiola (1991) suggest, "all cultures have unique ways of transmitting background knowledge about the world and of asking their children to display what they know" (p. 17). Zongyou and Xiaowei offer proof that Chinese ELLs differ not only from American students and other ELLs, but also from one another. However, research suggests that certain characteristics appear to be representative of the learning styles of Asian students. Anderson and Gunderson (2001) describe some of the unique characteristics of Asian cultural concepts of literacy acquisition. These include rereading of text for the purpose of memorization, correct spelling, and teacher (rather than parent) modeling

of reading. They propose that "educators need to respect and support parents' efforts to help their children learn to read and write, even though what they do at home might not completely match what we do at school" (p. 7). This reality provides a unique set of challenges for teachers of Chinese ELLs.

Researchers Liu and Littlewood (1997) noted that Chinese students reported that listening to their teachers was their most frequent class activity. This suggests that Chinese students are accustomed to teacher-centered classrooms in their home country. By contrast, teachers in the U.S. are more student-centered with teacher-student and student-student interactions being the norm. American teachers can coach Chinese students to participate verbally, thus scaffolding them toward a more student-centered model of learning.

Some previous researchers, such as Ballard and Clanchy (1984) and Bradley and Bradley (1984), reported that Chinese students lean toward rote learning and are used to learning mechanically. Gu (2003) points out that Chinese sayings like:

> 'Meaning reveals itself after a hundred times of reading' demonstrate the integration of repetition and meaning in the Chinese learning culture. Another saying, 'Master 300 Tang poems, and you become a poet yourself,' might be thought of as a folk theory of implicit learning. (p. 97)

In order to identify the learning style of Asian learners, Smith and Smith (1999) conducted a study of Chinese-speaking students as compared to English-speaking students. Table 1 provides a summary of their findings.

The researchers sought to identify the self-reported learning characteristics of Chinese students as compared to Australian, English-speaking students when measured by the Approaches to Study Inventory (ASI). Deep approach, relating ideas, use of evidence, fear of failure, extrinsic motivation, disorganized study, achievement motivation, globetrotting (a measure of the ability to find supporting evidence in

multiple sources), and operation learning were found to be significant for the Chinese learner. The Australian learners scored higher only on the measure for intrinsic motivation. The findings in this study further indicate that, while Chinese learners require a large number of facts to be committed to memory, they are not surface learners; rather, they use the remembered facts in order to construct meaning. Furthermore, these remembered facts should derive from recognized authorities.

Table 1

Instructional Implications from this Study for Chinese Learners

Conclusions from the Study	Implications for Instruction
Chinese students are not surface learners and have a strong need to develop an understanding of the material. *	• Develop peer-to-peer study groups coupled with consistent efforts to encourage students in the use of study groups. • Use instructional strategies that encourage understanding, as well as memory, of the text.
Chinese students are more likely to have genuine fear of failure.	• Provide models for assessment. • Give clear expectations and explanations.
Chinese students desire greater instructional structure.	• Support the learning of independent study strategies and study sequences. • Provide clear, consistent feedback.
Chinese students self-report disorganized study habits.	• Assist students with the development of independent study habits.
Chinese students display a high degree of motivation to study and learn.	• Provide structured, high-quality material.

*This finding is counter-indicated by former findings that Chinese students excel at tasks of rote memorization at the expense of understanding. However, the authors indicate that the Chinese students self-report only repetition as a memory strategy. This seems to indicate that alternative memorization strategies (such as mnemonic devices) should be directly taught to Chinese students.

Because of the perceived need to learn from authorities, to refrain from much self-expression, and to prefer teacher-centered classrooms,

Asian students, such as Zongyou and Xiaowei, often appear hesitant to take risks, construct meaning independent of the author's intention, or express personal viewpoints either orally or in writing. To scaffold her students over these potential hurdles, Ms. Chang employs the assistance of a Mandarin-speaking paraprofessional. The paraprofessional gently leads the students through process-based writing assignments by encouraging them to first respond to a writing prompt orally in their first language. She then writes their responses on a white board. After discussing the elicited responses, the paraprofessional provides them with English vocabulary words to correspond with the students' orally elicited Mandarin equivalents. The three work together to create a web utilizing both the Mandarin and English words. The web and the words are posted and available to the students as they construct the first draft of their writing assignment. Finally, the students read their work aloud to each other. While listening, the paraprofessional makes notes, offers suggestions, and provides praise. Finally, the students finish their papers. In this way, also, the students are able to present a written paper relatively free from errors to their teacher.

A case study of a four-year-old child, Yuan, entitled "A Chinese Girl's Storybook Experience at Home" (Wan, 2000), further describes the unique academic needs of Chinese ELLs. "Interviews with Yuan's grandparents and parents revealed that they valued read-alouds because they believe this activity could prepare children for school, help in moral and value education, provide a source of knowledge, help children learn to read, provide opportunities to practice home language, and entertain children...the preservation of Chinese culture was also an important factor" (Wan, 2000). Since she is aware of the didactic nature of the Mandarin practice of reading aloud to their children, Ms. Chang often chooses this type of story to read aloud in her ELL classes. She concludes these reading sessions by providing the students with an opportunity to discuss what they have learned from the story that they could apply to their lives.

Mandarin-speaking Chinese ELL students bring their own distinctive styles of learning with them to the U.S. By making only slight adjustments, Ms. Chang provides a comfortable arena in which Zongyou and Xiaowei can practice their new literacy. The teacher's respect for the

uniqueness of Chinese learners is a necessity for students to adjust optimally to their new American culture, to further their education at a solid pace, and to allow their new identity to merge more easily with their new lives in the United States.

Learn Contrastive Analysis (Language Differences) for the Two Languages

Chinese students often use their understanding of how Chinese is formed to construct English words, phrases, and sentences. As a result, teachers of Chinese students frequently have great difficulty grading students' papers. For example, the grammar of Chinese is rather simple when compared with English. Teachers need to understand the differences between Chinese and English and how those differences interfere with the learning of English.

Contrastive analysis is the study of how graphophonemic systems, concepts of print, grammar, and syntax features from the first language (L1), in this case, Chinese, influence the use of the second language (L2), English. There are two kinds of L1 transfers: *positive transfers* from L1 and *negative transfers* from L1. *Positive transfers* from L1 include similarities of L1 and L2 at the level of phonemes, graphemes, print concepts, grammar, and syntax. *Negative transfers* from L1 include differences of L1 and L2 at the level of phonemes, graphemes, print concepts, grammar, and syntax. Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict some examples of the negative and positive transfers for the English/Chinese graphophonemic systems, concepts of print, and grammar and syntax.

Ms. Chang uses her knowledge of contrastive analysis, as depicted in the figures, to:

1. predict the types of errors that students may make and scaffold the students so that the errors are avoided in their production of English writing;
2. use the students' knowledge of L1 as a basis for "building" a recognition of the patterns for L2;
3. directly and explicitly teach the positive, as well as the negative, transfers to the student; and

4. use the student's knowledge of L1/L2 transfers to analyze errors in the student's productive language in order to assess linguistic development.

In addition to the differences in grammar and syntax, there are also obvious differences in semantics and word choices between the Chinese and English languages. Seeing the differences between these two languages, teachers should understand that "when one learns a new language, she does not only have to learn different vocabulary and grammar but also has to reconstruct her thinking order and adjust to new language patterns" (Fu, 2003, p. 135). It is important for teachers to remember that all children make mistakes learning a language. For instance, while reading over Zongyou's paper, Ms. Chang notices the absence of articles throughout his writing. She uses this opportunity to make a personal note that she needs to provide direct instruction for Zongyou in the use of articles in English writing. However, she writes only words of praise for his increased proficiency in English spelling on his paper.

Encourage the Development of the Student's First Language

Allan and Miller (2005) advocate that bilingual students who are successful English readers use strategies in both L1 and L2 and use their first language to support their English. Atkinson (1993) and Schweers (1999) emphasize that classroom observation and second language acquisition studies indicate that it is positive and appropriate for students to use their first language in classes. Wishaw (1994) reports that there are huge benefits in language learning and proficiency when a student is able to work in two languages. In addition, Ernst-Slavit, Moor, and Maloney (2002) indicate that "the student's first language plays an essential role in the acquisition of a second language" (p. 118); specifically, they focus on findings from research in the 1980s and 1990s, which confirmed that the more the first language is academically supported, and combined with appropriate second language development, the more ELLs achieve academic success in the second language.

Figure 1. Graphophonemic System

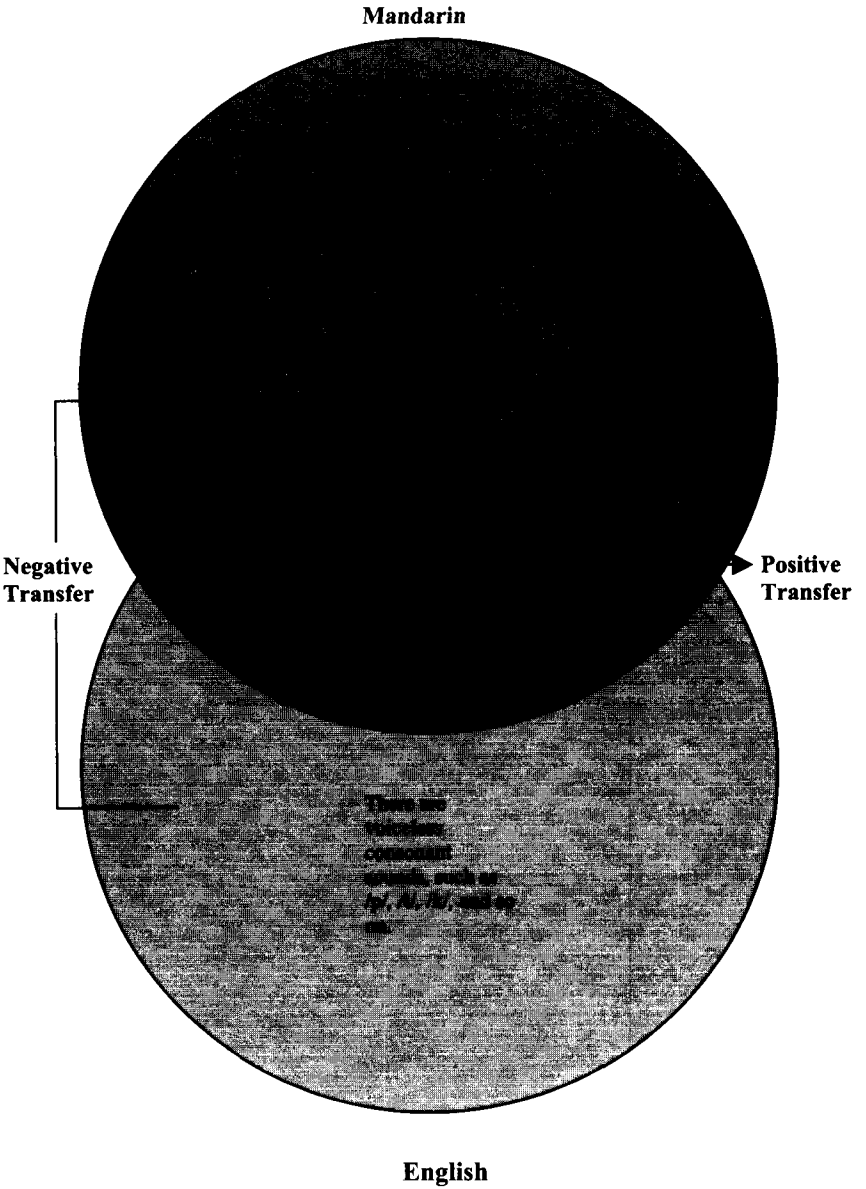


Figure 2. Concepts of Print

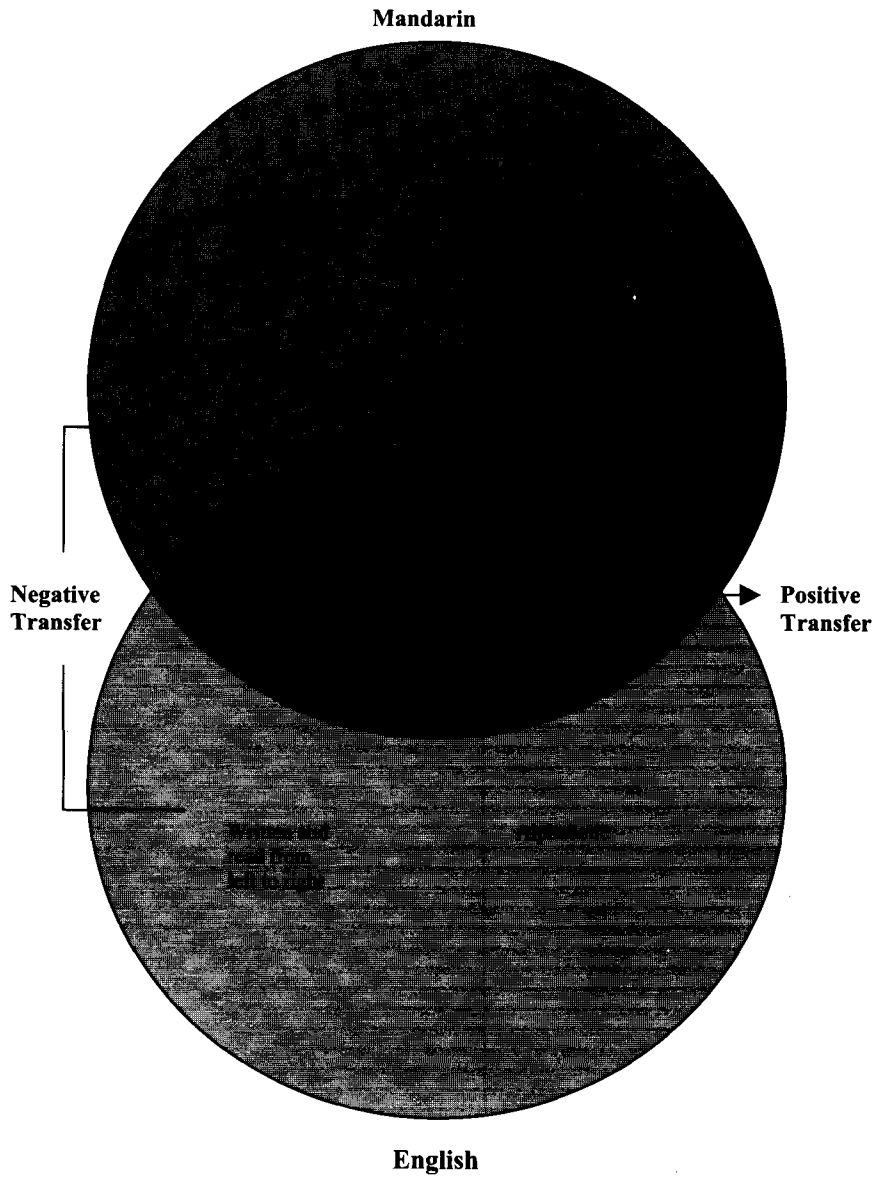
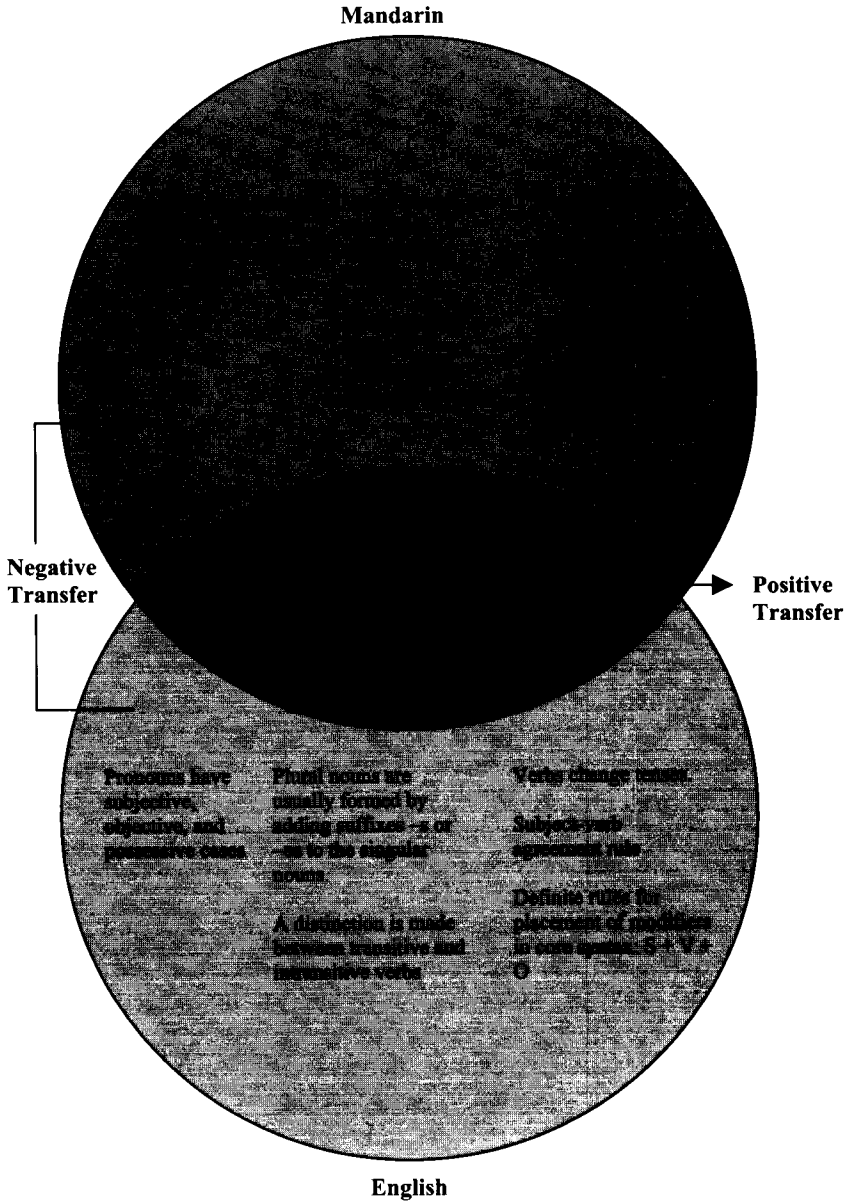


Figure 3. Grammar and Syntax



It is easier for ELLs to use their first language as a springboard for mastering the complicated rules associated with academic English, and then be given multiple opportunities to connect these rules with new information through speaking and writing in English. Fu (2003) notes that if teachers let Chinese students express themselves and present their ideas in Chinese, students have opportunities to continue the development of their thinking.

Ms. Chang encourages Zongyou and Xiaowei to strengthen their first language in many ways throughout the school day. She has the children generate first drafts of their writing in their native language, and she encourages their use of a bilingual dictionary that she has already taught the boys to use effectively. Ms. Chang also utilizes the Rosetta Stone Technique, a strategy that has proven successful for teachers in multilingual classrooms (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998). The ancient Rosetta Stone contains the same text in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic script, and several ancient Greek languages. Because the Rosetta Stone Technique allows English-speaking students and ELLs to share with one another vocabulary from their own language, it encourages active engagement, which is a necessity for optimal learning. Using the Rosetta Stone as a model, Ms. Chang makes a chart of everyday English words in one column. Zongyou and Xiaowei contribute equivalent words in Mandarin, while students who speak other languages contribute words from their languages in the successive columns. Ms. Chang displays this chart on the wall and, equally important, she and the students contribute to it on a regular basis. By doing so, she ensures their active engagement throughout the learning process.

According to Allan and Miller (2005), ELLs usually understand more of what they hear and read in English than they can express in speaking and writing. Since Ms. Chang needs a measure of Zongyou's and Xiaowei's English reading comprehension, she has her bilingual paraprofessional conduct reading comprehension checks in the boys' native language. In addition, during writing, Ms. Chang leads the students to express an idea in English, keeping in mind that their English (a work-in-progress) may require patience and scaffolding as the Mandarin students transition to English. She models sentences in

standard English followed by choral repetition with the Mandarin students. Ms. Chang encourages the students to read in Mandarin at home and encourages their parents to continue speaking Mandarin to their children (Fu, 2003).

Finally, Ms. Chang has built a classroom library filled with appropriate materials to support her Mandarin-speaking students' literacy development. For example, the book, *Mouse Match* by Ed Young (1997), which was written both in English and Chinese, is a good choice for emergent Chinese ELLs. Books written in English with Chinese themes are also recommended; for example, Ed Young's *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* (1989), and Ai-Ling Louie's *Yeh Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* (1982). Amy Tan's books, such as *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995) and *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), are recommended for older students.

Develop the ELLs Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking Strategies for English

Ms. Chang recognizes that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are inter-connected and she nurtures the second language development of Zongyou and Xiaowei in all four domains. Concomitantly, she strives to create an educational environment that facilitates the growth and development of critical thinking.

Reading

Ms. Chang uses many of the same strategies that work for struggling readers in English to scaffold Zongyou's and Xiaowei's second language reading acquisition. These include direct, explicit, comprehension strategy instruction and repeated readings for fluency. However, she also uses additional instructional strategies to assist these students to recognize the connections between their first language and their new language.

- Serving as a scribe, the paraprofessional asks Zongyou and Xiaowei to create stories from their own culture, using their own language, and then works with them to translate those stories into

English for the other members of the class to read.

- Ms. Chang uses traditional Mandarin stories in her literature circles. She asks the boys to first read the stories to the class in Mandarin. She then reads the same stories aloud to the group in English.

- Prior to presenting new English text to her students, Ms. Chang actively analyzes the text for vocabulary, figurative language, and language structures that might be difficult for her Mandarin-speaking ELLs. She pre-teaches the terms and structures, using concrete objects and demonstrations or graphic organizers.

Writing

Teaching writing to English Language Learners presents a further challenge. Researchers, such as Shin (2003), have pointed out that few ELL teachers have had experience in specifically teaching writing. She states that:

> in addition to the fact that writing can be time consuming and difficult to teach, many ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) teachers may not feel qualified to teach writing because they have not received enough specific training in the teaching of writing. Traditionally, TESOL (Teachers of English to speakers of other languages) programs have placed more emphasis on oral and reading skills than on writing skills. (p. 3)

Indeed, teaching ELLs to write is not easy because "the unfamiliar grammatical errors and different rhetorical patterns found in many ESOL compositions can stump even the most experienced writing teachers" (Shin, 2002, p. 30). Ms. Chang realizes that it is important for ELL teachers to use a process-based approach to writing. This process emphasizes the recursive and overlapping stages of writing as opposed to just a good product. According to Palmer, Hafner, and Sharp (1994), "If students are to construct meaning through writing, they must have a schema for the writing process, including its many overlapping and recursive stages" (p. 258). Furthermore, process-based writing allows for

students to self-regulate as developing writers; and, as illustrated earlier, process-based writing provides the scaffolding necessary for Zongyou and Xiaowei to freely express their ideas.

Ms. Chang encourages journal writing, a good strategy for teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing to Chinese ELLs. She encourages students to write in their journals two to three times a week, thus providing meaningful opportunities for them to develop their ability to think and write in English. The students are encouraged to volunteer to read their journal entries to their classmates. Ms. Chang does not grade the journals, but collects them to make sure the students complete the assignments. This way, students feel free to write, and she is able to use the journal writing to assess the English skills (vocabulary and sentence patterns) the students still need to master. When time permits, she provides feedback to students, thus encouraging the developing writers to read and think about her comments.

Ms. Chang views the ELLs' primary language as a major asset and encourages these students to keep writing in Chinese while developing their English skills. Ms. Chang allows Zongyou and Xiaowei to use invented spelling to express their ideas before they learn how to spell the words needed in their writing. She encourages the students to write in limited English, such as Chinese English (English words with Chinese syntax) and mixed language (Chinese with mixed English words) as long as the students continue to develop their thinking and writing skills. Ms. Chang also follows the suggestions of Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000) by allowing Zongyou and Xiaowei to use words from their first language in place of unknown English words. The boys then use a bilingual dictionary to help them choose the English word.

Ms. Chang modifies her planning to include writing practice specifically designed for Mandarin-speaking children. She asks Zongyou and Xiaowei to copy sentences from pattern books and then use the same sentence patterns to write their own pattern books. Fu (2003) advocates that students build English language sense, such as grammar rules, through this process. This strategy allows Ms. Chang to scaffold the acquisition of English grammar for her students, inspiring them to write more complex sentences. Ms. Chang gives specific directions, models

instruction, and provides scaffolding with multiple opportunities for the students to practice writing.

Listening and Speaking

Ms. Chang encourages and creates frequent opportunities for students to speak in English. Research indicates that ELLs develop social language known as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) through peer interaction in a social context prior to the development of the "language of school" known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1986). In his classic work, Cummins (1986) found that BICS develop for most ELLs within one to two years of repeated exposure, but CALP might take as much as seven years to master. It is helpful for the teacher to begin by teaching one or two new functional expressions every day. Teachers can also rephrase students' expressions of limited English to Standard English and ask the students to repeat after them.

In addition to these general classroom strategies, Ms. Chang has developed some specific strategies that seem to work particularly well with Zongyou and Xiaowei:

- She encourages the boys to listen to, and read along with, audio books in the classroom and at home. She knows that this is especially important for young ELLs whose parents cannot read to them in English.

- She has the boys practice-read using a tape recorder. Ms. Chang has the boys record their first oral reading of a new text and record themselves again after practicing the piece, thus self-monitoring their own improvement in fluency.

- Ms. Chang encourages the boys to listen to real-life English conversations as much as possible. She directly explains that English sometimes sounds different in real-life conversation. For example, some common phrases in English are hurriedly pronounced, resulting in dropped and modified sounds. Thus, the vowel in the word *you* may be pronounced or heard as a schwa

sound in real dialogue. When people try to say, "*What have you been up to?*" the sentence may become "*Whatcha been up to?*" As another example, "*How have you been?*" usually becomes "*How ya been?*" (Nova, 2002).

- Prior to asking them to speak aloud in class, Ms. Chang always gives Zongyou and Xiaowei time to prepare and systematically guides them to develop their speaking and listening abilities. This process, which can be time-consuming and tedious, is a necessity for most Chinese students.

- Ms. Chang encourages the students to spend their time outside of school practicing their listening and speaking skills. She often sends home a tape-recorder on which she has recorded text that was read aloud in class. Zongyou and Xiaowei then use the tape as a model for practicing oral reading at home.

Utilize Cooperative Learning Groups

Ms. Chang recognizes Fu's (2003) contention that for Chinese students "who are not used to sharing their thoughts in public, talking in small groups is a good place to start" (p. 68). There is research to support Ms. Chang's decision to use small groups in her ELL classroom. Mohan (1990) found that cooperative learning not only increases the amount of student talk but also the quality of student talk by providing opportunities for student to negotiate meaning. Furthermore, cooperative groups help Zongyou and Xiaowei, as well as Ms. Chang's other ELLs, immerse in a rich discourse environment. The students have opportunities to interact among themselves, asking questions, discussing the learned material, exchanging information on academic content, and collaborating on the assigned projects. Diaz-Rico (2004) points out that collaborative small-group discussion lowers ELLs' anxieties related to their perceived need to produce perfect English. By conducting cooperative groups in a class, Ms. Chang can "challenge all students and reach as many students as possible in a class of different language abilities" (Fu, 2003, p. 60). While the groups are at work, Ms. Chang provides additional coaching and support for Zongyou and Xiaowei to encourage their verbal participation. Ms. Chang carefully chooses assignments and materials

appropriate to the boys' culture and level of English literacy acquisition and acts as an authority available for explanations as well as a learning partner. Ms. Chang encourages teamwork and gives bonus points to groups who work well together. For students who finish early, she provides extension tasks or lets two groups compare their products. When grouping, she carefully places Zongyou and Xiaowei with students who have more skill in English. She keeps activities short and simple while students are learning how to work together. Finally, she monitors the groups and commends those who are on-task and talking appropriately.

Solicit Support Beyond the Classroom

Zongyou and Xiaowei are two examples of the large number of Chinese students who need ELL or bilingual assistance in U.S. schools. Multiple solutions must be sought to address the educational needs of these students, thus ensuring their success in the U.S. schools; beyond the classroom, the following areas require thoughtful attention:

- *Administrative support.* Educational administrators are charged with the responsibility of providing academic environments that support English Language Learners. This support is vital for the classroom teacher. According to the Nebraska Office of Equal Educational Opportunity (Rowch, 2005), it is the responsibility of educational administrators to obtain funding sources, support the development of curriculum, provide staff and materials, investigate program models and approaches, identify and assess students, ensure equal access to all school programs, and write policies and procedures for evaluating the ELL program. Examples of specific administrative tasks include the following: providing professional development for teachers; supporting the development of appropriate curriculum; acquiring textbooks, media and other relevant literacy material; and establishing the home-school and community-school connections.

- *Professional development.* In-service workshops should be developed for teachers and support staff to expand their knowledge of second language acquisition, including a

component on Chinese languages and culture. As these in-service components are designed, careful attention must be given to the vast differences among Chinese immigrants. Fu (2003), for example, cautions against the "model minority" images that present a stereotype for Asian students. Li (2004) emphasizes the problem with research that may disregard real needs because of this stereotype.

- *Curriculum.* Insufficient knowledge of and familiarity with U.S. culture makes it more difficult for Chinese students to adapt themselves to their new school and American society. Administrators can provide assistance in the development of curriculum for ELLs that supports the acquisition of knowledge of American history, geography, and governmental system, as well as familiarity with the local community (Fu, 2003).

- *Textbooks, media, and other literacy materials.* Mainstream classrooms must be adequately supplied to support the instruction of ELL students. Administrators can provide teachers with content area textbooks written in both Chinese and English. Teachers who have both Chinese and English proficiency may choose to translate portions of text themselves. In addition, direct instruction should be supplemented through the use of tapes (video and audio), computers and computer software, trade books, magazines, and newspapers.

- *Home-school connection.* Many ELLs act as "language brokers" for their families. According to McQuillan and Tse (1995), who coined this phrase, these students assist their monolingual families as they attempt to interact with the English-dominant environment. For this reason, Chinese ELLs can become powerful resources as administrators and teachers work to establish a relationship between the home and the school. Although this home-school relationship is especially vital for ELLs, it presents special challenges for administrators as well as the ELLs themselves. These administrative challenges include communication with parents using language appropriate methods (providing interpreter services and/or maintaining a resource of

translators and interpreters for language groups), and the development and implementation of parent involvement programs (Rowch, 2005). Finally, administrators can encourage teacher-parent communication by establishing clear expectations for teachers while providing them with information, training, support, and opportunities for implementation.

- *Community support.* Many communities can provide rich support for a school-based ELL programs. Administrators can develop and encourage the use of a list of community resources for teachers and facilitate teachers' access to the community. They can also encourage teachers to investigate community-based instruction, utilizing such strategies as service learning and field trips that allow students to more fully explore their environment. Administrators should take every opportunity to inform the community about school-based ELL programs, solicit funding and volunteer support for special needs, and coordinate community resources.

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Barbara C. Palmer and Judith T. Leclere are faculty members at Florida State University, where Chia-I Chen recently received her Master's degree. Sara Chang is a teacher at Pineview Elementary School, Tallahassee, Florida.